

Peter Beckstrom

### Becky

I am a man of singular vision.  
Not distracted. Each thought  
Requires time to hatch.  
Ideas come to me  
One at a time  
Like eggs down a conveyor belt.  
One by one they get placed into the carton.  
Occasionally one egg comes  
Down the belt seeming;  
A little bigger;  
A little whiter;  
A little more oval;  
Than another in my box.  
I swap it one for one.  
Fuck it! They're all  
Skillet fodder. Omelets  
Every one of them,  
Except the second to the right  
In the third row. That one is poached.  
I shot a fawn  
On my neighbors  
Clover plot. It was there  
And so was I. Armed  
With stock and steel  
I winged its grape.  
All the juice came running  
Down its funnel snout  
With no cup to catch it.  
My dad said once, "*Becky,*  
*Is the cup half-full, or half-gone?*".  
I said, "*Dad, I don't see no cup?*".  
Where was I?  
Did I ever tell you  
Ideas are like eggs?

## **Discontent Is Minnesota Winter**

Minnesota winters are joyfully received  
By those suffering seasonal amnesia.  
Its welcome worn by February  
Christmas trees and April Snow.  
Color deserts this cold desert,  
Sucked away by salt.  
Warmth is a tourist  
Escaping  
Through open doors  
And leaky windows.  
The frozen remains  
Of a cloud's cry is carried  
Away in blusters spreading  
Like speckled smoke  
Dancing against a cerulean scene.  
Jack Frost belches  
His hoary breath  
Upon any mug  
Smug enough  
To peer inside his gullet  
While a polar bullet  
(Whose multiplying missiles are  
Dependent upon the wind's whim)  
Shoots over dead leaves clinging  
Stubbornly to bleached Birch.  
Minnesota slows  
To the speed  
Of below  
Zero.  
Nature's NASCAR  
Screeching in reverse, leaving  
Trails of tread and turning  
Slushy snow into tire turds  
Harder than crystals cubed  
In arctic ice trays  
To be discarded  
At gas stations and parking lots,  
Which become convenient toilets,  
For ridding ourselves  
Of winter refuse.  
Mother Nature is geriatric.  
Minnesota is her summer  
Retreat. She abandons us  
Come the fall.

## Möebius Book

What a little thing you are,  
Square and bound  
In skin, standing tall  
In a row with the rest  
Of your friends and kin.  
You can't talk, but  
Speak volumes of lives  
And experiences from  
Yesterday, tomorrow, right now,  
But only when you're open.  
I choose you from among the rest.  
Your friends are jealous.  
I pull apart your cracking skin  
And read your insides,  
Divining what I can  
From your paper viscera.  
Your knowledge releases  
Me into the vast  
Textual dimensions  
Where letters become stars;  
Words become galactic havens;  
And you become a universe  
In which time moves  
At the whim of the creator.  
My mind has escaped  
The humdrum reality,  
But I must return. You  
Have earned the right  
To lay next to me  
As I sleep.  
Your time will come  
Again, on the wooden shelf,  
To wait for the next explorer  
Wishing to page through  
The internal infinitudes  
Of your little leathery body.

## Stray Thoughts

She yanks the child's leash.  
A skittish pup.  
Silent because it knew  
The struggle began with a whimper  
And ended in screams.  
I might have said something,  
If I thought she wouldn't take it out on the  
Dog. The kid. The child.

Its clothes aren't two sizes too big.  
It's just two sizes too small.  
Pulled along the sidewalk  
Like a garbage bag  
Too heavy to hoist;  
It was small enough though  
To carry in my backpack. That  
Dog. That kid. That child.

Passing the bakery's dumpster  
Its head lifted to greet  
That glorious stench;  
Last week's stale moldy bread.  
He was hungry enough  
To wish for maggots  
In that musty loaf. Poor  
Dog. Poor kid. Poor child.

Invisible to passers-by  
Until it brushes against a leg.  
They will look and find  
A child's shell hiding  
The scared stray.  
Towed along by  
Its harness of hate. Stupid  
Dog. Stupid kid. Stupid child.

His name is Buddy.  
He whines while sleeping.  
I held him once for too long.  
That was a mistake. We are  
Not friends. Her  
Dog. My kid. Our child.

## You Disgust

Let tomorrow be your maid. Keep cleaning though,  
You're living yesterday right now. You can't hide

Your cranial filth. It's the pan crusted  
At its contoured corners with last night's lasagna;

Or the errant piss drips in front of the toilet;  
Everything cruddy at the edge of human perception.

Your ingenuousness doesn't escape scrutiny.  
If your pain is a painting it would be *The Scream*

Held under water by your own inability to  
Let go. Come up for air.

Yesteryears abuse slices. The internal damage lasts  
The longest, flares the brightest (areola rosy),

Never fully fading to an acceptable sight.  
The gum eraser obliterates any sign

Of graphite scrapes. Your eraser perches atop  
Ten cent pencils; cheap and pink like your scars.

Never gone just smudged. Crossing it out  
Would have looked better.

You keep smearing and manicuring  
Hoping to fool people's eyes. We all know

When your words spew forth:  
You're a landfill jammed to capacity;

Sour cream beyond its expiration;  
Rubber razors against sheathed veins

That carry no blood, only bile.